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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 001440

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2017

TAGS: PTER ASEC PREL MOPS SO ET UG

SUBJECT: Somali -- Heavy Fighting Continues

Classified by PolOff John O'Leary. Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Ref: Nairobi 1429

¶1. (C) Fighting continues today (3/30) in Mogadishu between Ethiopian forces and militia of the Hawiye/Haber Gedir sub-clan, and it appears to remain concentrated around the stadium in the northern part of the city. The Ethiopians do not appear to be advancing and may be surrounded in some locations. According to a contact in communication with the Ethiopian forces, the Ethiopians had requested "reinforcements".

¶2. (C) The Hawiye/Abgal sub-clan appears to be staying out of the fight for now, but we are receiving reports that the Hawiye/Murosade sub-clan has joined their Haber Gedir "cousins". We are receiving numerous reports that women, and perhaps children, are assisting the clan fighters by bringing them water, ammunition, and weapons; and they may also be throwing barricades together.

¶3. (C) Through the morning, there were no reports that the Ethiopians were using helicopters in today's fray. A UN security official in Nairobi informed us at 1215, however, that an Ethiopian helicopter had crashed in front of the UN compound in Mogadishu, about a kilometer from the international airport. Contacts in Mogadishu report that the use of helicopters yesterday had the effect of broadening support for the Haber Gedir fighters. The Ethiopian use of helicopters also engendered a widespread belief in Mogadishu that the United States was fully supporting the Ethiopian combat effort with intelligence, materiel, and American combat helicopters.

¶4. (U) Contrary to Somali press and web reporting, no Ethiopian general appears to be in militia hands. Ethiopian soldiers and officers may have been captured, however; and the bodies of some Ethiopian dead remained on the streets during the night.

¶5. (C) Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces again appear to be playing a minimal role in the battle. One source reported that yesterday these soldiers had advanced on a neighborhood in the vicinity of the milk factory located at the northeast end of 21st October Road, but were driven back. This seems to be an Ethiopian - Hawiyeen fight.

Ranneberger